THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (e) A request from the Government of Andhra Pradesh was received in April this year for establishing Bharat Electronics Limited's (BEL) Thermal Imager Detector Unit at either Machilipatnam or at Hyderabad. The State Government had proposed to provide the necessary support facility for the purpose. The "detector" is a high technology, costly and proprietary sub-system presently being imported. The technology is akin to semiconductor technology and can be cost-effectively undertaken at a location where expertise and infrastructure in terms of manpower and machinery exist for manufacture of semi-conductors. Such skills and infrastructure are not available at Machilipatnam and Hyderabad. BEL has not finalised any plans for manufacture of the "detector" due to technological complexity and involvement of huge investment for technology transfer and creating infrastructure.

Indo-Russian Naval Exercise

1819. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Navy carried out an operational exercise with the Russian Navy in the Indian Ocean for the first time;

(b) if so, whether the new thrust was on Anti-Submarine Warfare and Air Defence; and

(c) if so, the significance of this exercise and the extent of cooperation between the two Navies?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) It will not be in public interest to divulge further details regarding these joint exercises.

Funds for Ranikhet Cantonment Board

†1820. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the year-wise amount provided as grant for various items to Ranikhet Cantonment Board during the last few years;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.